



Sponsor Testimony

Senate Bill 154

Ohio House Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee

November 14th, 2023

Chair Loychik, Vice-Chair Demetriou, Ranking Member Miller, and Members of the House Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 154, which upon enactment will update definitions of the U.S. Armed Forces, Armed Services, and Uniformed Services in the Revised Code to include the U.S. Space Force.

The United States Space Force was established as an independent branch of the uniformed services on December 20, 2019, with their primary mission being to “Secure our Nation’s interest in, from, and to space.” There are nearly 15,000 Americans serving out this mission; a force made up of 1/3 civilians, 1/3 enlisted, and 1/3 officers.¹ Some of these personnel are Ohioans, our neighbors, serving in the Space Delta 18 at the National Space Intelligence Center outside Fairborn Ohio.²

The idea for SB 154 was brought to me directly by the Department of Defense, with whom I had been working regarding occupational licensure legislation. They indicated to me that until we pass this bill, there are no guarantees under Ohio law that those in the Space Force are eligible to receive the same benefits and protections as those in other branches of the military. According to the DOD, failure to pursue the tweaks contained in this legislation could have dire impacts on the well-being of military personnel and their families; risking their access to healthcare, housing, education, and more. The DOD went as far to say that Space Force recruiting, resiliency, retention, and even readiness is at risk without enacting the policies in Senate Bill 154.³

Senate Bill 154 updates various definitions to include the Space Force in the Ohio Revised Code, providing parity with other branches; and the following are a few examples demonstrating its impact.

¹ <https://www.spaceforce.mil/About-Us/About-Space-Force/>

² <https://www.spoc.spaceforce.mil/About-Us/Space-Delta-18>

³ DOD New England Regional Liaison Melissa Willette before the New Hampshire House State-Federal Relations Committee

Senate Bill 154 clarifies that members (and/or spouses) of the Space Force:

- May receive a temporary or regular license or certificate to practice a trade or profession if the licensing authority elects and specified requirements are met
- Are entitled to enjoy the same tax benefits as other branches (deadline extension, state income tax waived if member dies in line of duty, etc.)
- Are guaranteed the right to reemployment in their civilian jobs if they leave that job to perform in the uniformed service.

Additionally, this bill clarifies that veterans of the Space Force:

- Receive the same additional credit on a civil service examination that veterans of other branches receive
- Are guaranteed to have their prior military service counted toward their new pension program when seeking reemployment
- Are eligible for housing in a veterans' home operated by the Ohio Department of Veterans Services.

A more “Detailed Analysis of SB 154” can be found under “General Submissions” which covers all of impacts of this bill. If the Chair would indulge, I’d also ask it be made available to the public online under the tab for today’s meeting if it is not already. The provisions within the bill are of critical importance to the Space Force’s future in Ohio and after three hearings in the Ohio Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee, with no opponent testimony, the committee unanimously voted 4-0 to favorably report the bill, followed by a highly favorable 31-0 vote on the Senate floor.⁴

Before I wrap up, I’d like to offer a word of gratitude for the members of this committee who have themselves served. We as elected officials have sworn allegiance to the Constitution, but you all have sworn to defend the Constitution with your life. To each of you and the other men and women who have served our nation in our armed forces – Thank You.

I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.

⁴ <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/135/sb154/votes>